N° 92. SATURDAY, *November* 4, 1786.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

SIR,

A Correſpondent of yours has deſcribed the uneaſineſs he feels from a wife of a romantic turn of mind. It is my misfortune to be yoked to a huſband who would have pleaſed that Lady to a T, but who is a perpetual diſtreſs to me; who teaſes me from morning to night with what he calls ſentiment; and talks for ever of ſomething which he terms fineneſs of mind.

I am the daughter of a gentleman of moderate fortune in the ſouth of Scotland, who, early in life, married a Lady who brought him no fortune indeed, but ſoon enriched him with four ſons and five daughters, of whom I am the eldeſt. By the aſſiſtance of a great man, whoſe intereſt in the county my father had eſpouſed, my brothers were ſoon ſhipped off to India, and ſome other far-off places, to ſhift for themſelves, and puſh their fortune as they beſt could. It was more difficult to diſpoſe of us. My mother propoſed

proposed to breed some of us to business, to put us in a way, as she said, of earning an honest livelihood for ourselves. The pride of my father could not submit to this proposition, and he thought it better that we should starve like gentlewomen descended from an ancient family.

We were accordingly kept at home in the old and crazy mansion-house, where we received such an education as my mother, assisted by our parish-minister (who happened to be a relation of hers), could give us. As to my father, he was so much occupied in managing his farm, and in labouring to make the two ends of the year meet, that he had little leisure to bestow any attention upon us. If at any time he addressed himself to me and my sisters, it was to check any thing that appeared to him like extravagance in our dress, to recommend œconomy and attention to household-affairs, and to praise those happy times when men were not scared from marriage by the extravagance of wives; and when, of course, every daughter of a respectable family was sure of a good husband as soon as she was brought from the nursery.

A continual flow of animal spirits, and a cheerful disposition, enabled me to support this life, without feeling much uneasiness, or much

much desire to change my situation. When I had entered my twentieth year, a female relation of my father's, who resides chiefly in town, honoured us with a visit. She was pleased to express much satisfaction with my looks and appearance, blamed my father for not sending me to town; and said, that were I once properly introduced into the world, I might be certain of a good marriage. These observations were accompanied with a warm invitation to pass the next winter at her house, where she told my father it would cost him nothing but a mere trifle for my cloaths, and that he might think himself very happy to be able to dispose of a daughter at so easy a rate.

These arguments at length prevailed, and it was agreed that I should attend my cousin to town. I will fairly own, Sir, that I felt a certain degree of uneasiness at the thoughts of being exposed, as it were, to sale, and condemned to give my hand to the highest bidder. My parents, it was plain, sent me to town with no other view than that I might find a husband there; and when I took leave of them, I could easily see they laid their account that I was not to return without one.

These reflections were soon lost amidst the gaiety and hurry of a town-life; I enjoyed its pleasures and amusements without thinking of confe-

consequences; and would have forgotten the object of my journey, had not my prudent kinswoman recalled my attention to it from time to time, and inculcated, in terms sufficiently strong, the absolute necessity of changing my state.

Meanwhile the season passed away; and tho' I met with a sufficient degree of attention at all public places, and though my cousin spared no pains to set me off to the best advantage, nothing like a serious proposal of marriage ever was made.

Such was the natural lightness of my spirit, and easiness of my disposition, that, without much difficulty, I reconciled myself to the idea of returning to my father's; and nothing gave me any disquietude, but the thoughts of continuing a burden on him. But the solicitude of my cousin, who had in a manner undertaken to dispose of me, increased daily, and afforded me, I must confess, rather amusement than uneasiness. When she saw me led out to dance by a younger brother, she could not conceal her chagrin; and from her manner and conversation, a person unacquainted with her motive might have been led to think, that there was something baneful in the touch of a man who did not possess a certain fortune.

While matters wore this unpromising aspect, and the period fixed for my return to the country

try approached, we went with a party to the theatre, to ſee the celebrated Mrs. Siddons play in the tragedy of The Gameſter. The diſtreſs of Mrs. Beverly ſoon engaged my attention ſo completely, that it was ſome time before I obſerved, that, by an accidental change of places in the box, a gentleman ſomewhat advanced in life, and whom I had never ſeen before, was placed by me. He ſeemed deeply affected by the play; and after it was over, addreſſed to me ſome obſervations on the piece and the performers. He appeared to be pleaſed with a remark or two which I happened to make on the play, praiſed the feeling I had ſhown during its repreſentation, and then entered more deeply into the ſubject of plays and of feelings. I cannot ſay that I underſtood all he ſaid; but either he did not perceive my ignorance, or kindly wiſhed to inſtruct me; and ſo continued talking till it was time to retire.

When we got home, my couſin obſerved, that I had been well placed that evening. "Mr. *Edwards*," ſaid ſhe, "is not one of thoſe young, giddy, extravagant fops whom one generally meets with at public places. He has lately ſucceeded to a large fortune by the death of an elder brother, and the world ſays he is looking out for a wife. He is juſt the ſort of man I ſhould wiſh for you, and I have engaged

" engaged him to dinner on Monday next; ſo " I deſire you may be at home."

The imagination of my good kinſwoman dwelt conſtantly on Mr. Edwards, whom ſhe ſeemed to conſider as my laſt ſtake, and many a good advice I received as to my conduct and behaviour on this important Monday. " Mr. " Edwards," ſaid ſhe, " is a ſedate, ſenſible " man; you muſt not therefore talk at random, " and laugh, as you ſometimes do. You muſt, " above all, be attentive to him, and do not " engage in any idle talk with the reſt of the " company." When the day came, my couſin attended my toilet in perſon; and, had I been going to a birth-day ball, could not have beſtowed more pains than ſhe did in dreſſing me out in the manner that appeared to her moſt likely to make an impreſſion on the devoted Mr. Edwards.

You may well believe that I was much entertained with this anxiety to pleaſe a perſon I had ſeen but once, and who I could not ſuppoſe had ever beſtowed one thought on me. When the company aſſembled, I found that, in the ſelection ſhe had made, my couſin had done me ample juſtice. The females were either old or uncommonly plain in their appearance. By ſome manœuvre I was placed next to Mr. Edwards at dinner; but there, the ridicule of my

own ſituation added to my natural flow of ſpirits, and forgetting all the prudent advices I had received, I yielded without reſerve to the diſpoſition of the moment, and was highly amuſed with the looks I from time to time received from the head of the table, which though unobſerved by the reſt of the company, were to me ſufficiently intelligible.

My artleſs unpremeditated manner was however more ſucceſsful than my couſin expected, or I could foreſee. Mr. Edwards repeated his viſits, and after ſome time offered me his hand in the moſt reſpectful and delicate manner. In marrying Mr. Edwards I did no violence to my own inclinations. Though I cannot ſay that I loved him, I eſteemed his character; I was grateful for the diſtinctions with which he had honoured me, and I was firmly determined to diſcharge all the duties of a wife.

Soon after our marriage, he carried me on an excurſion to England; and as he wiſhed, he ſaid, to enjoy my converſation without interruption, we travelled alone. For the firſt day or two I endeavoured to amuſe him as I beſt could, by talking of the face of the country, the towns through which we paſſed, the gentlemens ſeats we ſaw, and ſuch like common topics. One day, however, he at once ſtruck me dumb, by aſking whether I was moſt pleaſed

pleaſed with *Marivaux* or *Riccoboni?* I was at length obliged to confeſs, that I did not know the meaning of his queſtion. "Gracious "Heavens!" exclaimed he, "have you never, "*Matilda* (for ſo he always calls me, though "I have told him a thouſand times that I was "chriſtened Martha), peruſed the delightful "pages of theſe celebrated authors?" In a word, Sir, had I told him that I had never read the ſcripture, he could not have teſtified more aſtoniſhment.

Our jaunt was ſhortened, and we hurried into the country, that I might, without interruption, apply myſelf to the ſtudy of the French language, without which my huſband plainly inſinuated that I could never be a companion for a rational creature. To this I had no objection; and I reſolved, by aſſiduous application, to make up for the deficiencies in my education. But this will not ſatisfy my huſband, and I now plainly perceive, that were I as accompliſhed as any of my ſex, it would not mend the matter one bit. If I happen to be in good humour when he is in a grave fit (which, to ſay the truth, he frequently is), he aſcribes it to want of attachment, and tells me, that if I felt that ſympathy of ſoul in which true happineſs conſiſts, I could not behave in that manner. If I receive my friends and neigh-

bours with common attention, he ſays, that if I loved like him, I could not dedicate ſo much of my time to the gratification of others. If I quit him to look after my houſehold-concerns, he talks of vulgar cares and unfeeling ſolicitudes; though, at the ſame time, with all his ſentiment and refinement, he is by no means indifferent to the pleaſures of the table; and it was but yeſterday that he was out of humour the whole day, becauſe the mutton was over-roaſted, and the cook had put too much garlick into an omelet.

Under favour, Sir, I have been ſometimes led to ſuſpect, that the unhappineſs of my huſband proceeds from a certain degree of ſelfiſhneſs, which he has not been at pains to reſtrain within due bounds. I would willingly, however, do every thing in my power to remove his uneaſineſs, but find myſelf altogether at a loſs how to act. His diſtreſſes are ſo various, and often of ſo peculiar a nature, that when I exert myſelf the moſt to pleaſe him, I frequently give him the greateſt pain. In this hard ſituation I at length reſolved to apply to you for advice and aſſiſtance; which will much oblige,

Your conſtant reader,

MARTHA EDWARDS.

ALL

ALL this comes of not marrying a younger man. Had Miſs Martha (or Matilda, ſince her huſband will have it ſo) wedded one of the young gentlemen of the preſent mode, ſhe would have found him perfectly indifferent as to what feelings ſhe poſſeſſed, or what authors ſhe read; but he would probably have aſked ſome preliminary queſtions about her fortune, which Mr. Edwards ſeems to have overlooked. As to the niceties of the table, that is a feeling common to both ſchools, in which the new indeed rather ſurpaſſes the old: that ſtudy therefore I would recommend to Mrs. Edwards. The codes of "ſentiment and fineneſs of mind" are ſo voluminous, that I know not how to deſire her to undergo a courſe of them; but it will not be difficult for her to make herſelf miſtreſs of *Hannah Glaſſe*.

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